

## Keep Your Meter Box Clear

Seattle Public Utilities staff must access your water meter in order to collect accurate meter readings. If a meter reader can quickly collect a reading from your meter on the first visit to your property, it helps keep utility costs down.

### Here are some tips to ensure that your water meter is accessible:

- Trim bushes and trees that block the way to the meter.
- Keep pets away from the path that leads to your meter.  
(If you have a dog in the meter area, please let us know.)
- Remove objects that cover or block access to the meter box.  
(e.g. cars, trailers, garbage cans and recycling bins, construction equipment or supplies, landscape bark or gravel.)
- Arrange for access to meters located behind locked gates.
- Display your house address clearly.

**Special Note:** If Seattle Public Utilities staff must clear your meter of landscape plantings or other obstructions in order to provide access for the

meter reader, your utility account may be charged a fee for this service. For more information, please call (206) 684-3000.

## Water Supply Overview

(As of June 16, 2003)

	Good	Caution	Warning
Consumption	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
Supply Outlook	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
River Flows for Fish	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>

## Sign-Up for the Automatic Bill Payment Program

The Automatic Bill Payment program gives Seattle utility customers the option of paying their electric, water, sewer and garbage bills automatically from their checking accounts. This service is available at no additional charge. Visit our web site at [www2.cityofseattle.net/html/citizen/ach/](http://www2.cityofseattle.net/html/citizen/ach/) for more information and to apply online. Customers may also call (206) 684-3000 for more information.

## Walk-In Center Moves

Starting the week of July 28<sup>th</sup>, the Walk-In Payment Center will reopen at Key Tower 2777, 700 Fifth Avenue. This in-person payment center replaces the former facility located in the Municipal Building on Fourth Avenue. A new payment drop box will also be located in Key Tower's 4<sup>th</sup> floor lobby. We look forward to serving you in our new location.

## Living Lead-Free

### Introduction

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Seattle Public Utilities are concerned about lead in your drinking water. Although most homes in the community have very low levels of lead in their drinking water, some have lead levels above the EPA action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb), or 0.015 milligrams of lead per liter of water (mg/L). Under Federal law we are required to have a program in place to minimize lead in your drinking water. This program includes corrosion control treatment, source water treatment, and public education. Corrosion control treatment has been in place since 1982. If you have any questions about how we are carrying out the requirements of the lead regulation please give us a call at (206) 684-7834. This newsletter explains the simple steps you can take to protect you and your family by reducing your exposure to lead in drinking water.

### Health effects of lead

Lead is a common metal found throughout the environment in lead-based paint, air, soil, household dust, food, certain types of pottery porcelain and pewter, and water. Lead can pose a significant risk to your health if too much of it enters your body. Lead builds up in the body over many years and can cause damage to the brain, red blood cells and kidneys. The greatest risk is to young children and pregnant women. Amounts of lead that won't hurt adults can slow down normal mental and physical development of growing bodies. In addition, a child at play often comes into contact with sources of lead contamination—like dirt and dust—that rarely affect an adult. It is important to wash children's hands and toys often, and to try to make sure they only put food in their mouths.

**Lead** continued on next page

## Lead in drinking water

Lead in drinking water, although rarely the sole cause of lead poisoning, can significantly increase a person's total lead exposure, particularly the exposure of infants who drink baby formulas and concentrated juices that are mixed with water. The EPA estimates that drinking water can make up 20 percent or more of a person's total exposure to lead.

Lead is unusual among drinking water contaminants in that it seldom occurs naturally in water supplies like rivers and lakes. Lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of the corrosion, or wearing away, of materials containing lead in the water distribution system and household plumbing. These materials include lead-based solder used to join copper pipe, and brass and chrome plated brass faucets. In 1986, Congress banned the use of lead solder containing greater than 0.2% lead, and restricted the lead content of faucets, pipes and other plumbing materials to 8.0%.

When water stands in plumbing systems containing lead for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into your drinking water. This means the first water drawn from the tap in the morning, or later in the afternoon after returning from work or school, can contain fairly high levels of lead.

## Steps you can take in the home to reduce exposure to lead in drinking water

Despite our best efforts to control water corrosivity and remove lead from the water supply, lead levels in some homes or buildings can be high. To find out whether you need to take action in your own home, have your drinking water tested to determine if it contains excessive concentrations of lead. Testing the water is essential because you cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water. Some local laboratories that can provide this service are listed at the end of this newsletter. To hear a recorded list of state-certified water-testing laboratories, call (206) 684-7801.

**If a water test indicates that the drinking water drawn from a tap in your home contains lead above 15 ppb, then you should take the following precautions:**

Let the water run from the tap before using it for drinking or cooking any time the water in a faucet has gone unused for more than six hours. The longer water resides in your home's plumbing the more lead it may contain. Flushing the tap means running the cold water faucet until the water gets noticeably colder, usually about 15-30 seconds. Although toilet flushing or showering flushes water through a portion of your home's plumbing system, you still need to flush the water in each faucet before using it for drinking or cooking. Flushing tap water is a simple and inexpensive measure you can take to protect your family's health. It usually uses less than one or two gallons of water and costs less than \$.10 - \$.20 per month. To conserve water, fill a couple of bottles for drinking water after flushing the tap, and whenever possible, use the first flush water to wash the dishes or water the plants. If you live in a high-rise building, letting the water flow before using it may not work to lessen your risk from lead. The plumbing systems have more, and sometimes larger, pipes than smaller buildings. Ask your landlord for help in locating the source of the lead and for advice on reducing the lead level.

- Try not to cook with, or drink water from the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve more lead more quickly than cold water. If you need hot water, draw water from the cold tap and heat it on the stove.
- Remove loose lead solder and debris from the plumbing materials installed in newly constructed homes, or homes in

which the plumbing has recently been replaced, by removing the faucet strainers from all taps and running the water from 3 to 5 minutes. Thereafter, periodically remove the strainers and flush out any debris that has accumulated over time.

- If your copper pipes are joined with lead solder that has been installed illegally since it was banned within the Seattle city limits in 1980 and in King County in 1985, notify the plumber who did the work and request that the lead solder be replaced with lead-free solder. Lead solder looks dull gray, and when scratched with a key looks shiny. In addition, notify your state health department, or Seattle-King County Health Department Plumbing Inspector at (206) 233-7914 about the violation.
- Have an electrician check your wiring. If grounding wires from the electrical system are attached to your pipes, corrosion may be greater. Check with a licensed electrician or your local electrical code to determine if your wiring can be grounded elsewhere. DO NOT attempt to change the wiring yourself because improper grounding can cause electrical shock and fire hazards.

**The steps described above will reduce the lead concentrations in your drinking water. However, if a water test indicates that the drinking water coming from your tap contains lead concentrations in excess of 15 ppb after flushing, or after we have completed our actions to minimize lead levels, then you may want to take the following additional measures:**

- Purchase or lease a home treatment device. Home treatment devices are limited in that each unit treats only the water that flows from the faucet to which it is connected, and all of the devices require periodic maintenance and replacement. Devices such as reverse osmosis systems or distillers can effectively remove lead from your drinking water. Some activated carbon filters may reduce lead levels at the tap, however all lead reduction claims should be investigated. Be sure to check the actual performance of a specific home treatment device before and after installing the unit.
- Purchase bottled water for drinking and cooking.
- You can consult a variety of sources for additional information. Your family doctor or pediatrician can perform a blood test for lead and provide you with information about the health effects of lead. State and local government agencies that can be contacted include:

Seattle Public Utilities Water Quality and Supply Division can provide you with a recorded list of Puget Sound area state-certified laboratories at (206) 684-7801 and provide general information about your community's water supply at (206) 684-7834.

The Seattle Department of Design, Construction and Land Use's microfiche walk-in counter at 700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000 has building permit records, which may contain the names of your building's general contractor. Seattle-King County Health Department has plumbing permit records issued since 1987 only, for which a permit was obtained by the plumbing contractor. This information can be obtained by writing the Seattle-King County Health Department, Licenses and Permits, 201 Smith Tower, Seattle, WA 98104.

The Washington State Department of Health at (360) 236-4501 or the Seattle-King County Health Department Hazards Line at (206) 296-4692 can provide you with information about the health effects of lead and how you can have your child's blood tested.

The following is a list of some state-approved laboratories in your area you can call to have your water tested for lead:

Aquatic Research	(206) 632-2715
Laucks Testing Lab	(206) 767-5060
WDOH Environmental Services	(206) 361-2898

